

order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CUMMINGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HOLDING THE ADMINISTRATION RESPONSIBLE FOR THE U.S. LEGACY IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, it is past time to hold this administration accountable for its actions in Iraq and for its actions throughout the region.

Our standing in the world and throughout the Middle East is at an all-time low. And our standing in popularity has just about disappeared. The administration's policies have only brought instability and conflict. The strategy of preemptive war has, and we have seen it, been met with disbelief. It has been met with criticism from all corners of the world.

The administration keeps beating the drum of war with Iran, and its inaction in northern Iraq may lead to armed conflict with Turkey. A real leader, an effective Commander in Chief, knows that the use of force should be the very last possible option, not the first. The blame for this sits squarely in the Oval Office.

And what about the people the administration was supposed to be liberating? Many live now without the basic services they had for generations: electricity, clean water, basic health care, education. And at least 4 million Iraqis have fled their homes. Many are displaced within their own country, and millions more have escaped to neighboring Iran and Syria. Despite what the administration has claimed, the fault does not lie on the Iraqi people or the international community. Once again the blame belongs one place and one place only: that's with our administration.

Let's look at our international human rights record, Mr. Speaker. From Guantanamo to Abu Ghraib, a scandal, to the mercenary Blackwater security forces, the face of American policy emerges as goons, thugs, and cowboys.

Or what about torture? The administration says it doesn't promote torture. Yet day in and day out we read news media reports of an administration promoting rendition and "enhanced interrogation methods." These methods allow for everything short of death. The responsibility lies at the feet of one man. Not a general. Not the Justice Department. Not the men and women of the intelligence community.

And certainly not the brave men and women who are serving us in Iraq. One man.

And it does not get much better here, right here at home, where the administration is pushing for more ways to spy on American citizens. They are attacking their political adversaries by questioning their patriotism. They even ousted a covert CIA operative. The President at that time said that anyone caught for such an action would be removed from his staff. Now it turns out that Karl Rove, Richard Armitage, Scooter Libby, and Ari Fleischer didn't count and the administration chose to put them above the law.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, we have to ask ourselves who's really to blame. I can only think of one person.

And, finally, most shameful of all, the legacy of this occupation of Iraq has left a generation of men and women with physical and mental wounds that may never heal. And how did the administration thank them for their bravery on behalf of our Nation? Walter Reed. Long waits for necessary medical treatment at local VA hospitals. And in some cases, extended deployments. What kind of Commander in Chief would do that?

Remember the good old days when past Presidents said, and meant it, that "the buck stops here," the buck stops with them? This administration seems to think the buck stops everywhere but 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for the President to take the responsibility for his actions and turn the tide around, and he can do that by providing our men and women in uniform the equipment they need to come home safely; by funding the safe, responsible, and timely withdrawal of our troops; and by regaining, in turn, our place as a world leader promoting peace and stability.

Mr. Speaker, hold this administration accountable. Bring our troops home. End this senseless occupation.

NO PLACE LIKE HOME: ROCKSPRINGS, TEXAS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, in the vastness of west Texas, the sky is a brilliant brazen blue and a place where sparse live oak trees fight to even exist. In the stillness of these arid plains is the remote south Texas town of Rocksprings.

The people of this community of only 1,250 had a homecoming Saturday for their favorite son, Deputy Gilmer Hernandez. I was honored to be there. The ceremony, ironically, took place on the courthouse square under the pecan trees and in front of the old limestone courthouse. Irony because, you see, Mr. Speaker, the town was celebrating the release of Gilmer Hernandez from the Federal penitentiary. He had been sent to prison for, as local sheriff,

Donnie Letsinger put it "just doing his job for the rest of us." The sheriff spoke the sentiments of most of the townspeople that I got to talk to.

The town was decorated with signs and flags and banners in windows of houses and in front of stores. Anyway, the ceremony started off with a lengthy prayer by the local Baptist preacher, and then there was a rousing pledge to the flag. There were tears and speeches by politicians. The mayor, Rachel Gallegos, presented Deputy Hernandez a proclamation from the city as Rocksprings' Favorite Son.

Most of the community turned out, many carrying signs of "Welcome Home, Gilmer." Gilmer's family was there, his wife, Ashley; and his wonderful young daughter. When Gilmer was shipped off to Federal prison, the people of this small town rallied around his family. The town paid the rent on his pickup truck, took his family into their homes, provided food, and took care of his mortgage on his house. They sent him letters while he was incarcerated; they prayed for him; and when he got home, he already had a job with the city and the local phone company.

Mr. Speaker, this is an interesting celebration considering Gilmer was a convicted felon. Gilmer Hernandez grew up in Rocksprings. His family is from there. He became a deputy sheriff for Edwards County. He always dreamed of being a lawman, even though he made a little bit over just \$20,000 a year patrolling a county the size of Delaware.

Here's what happened sometime ago: while this young deputy was on routine patrol late at night, he came in contact with an SUV that ran the red light in Rocksprings, Texas. He pulled the vehicle over; and as he approached it, the truck sped off and swerved to run over the deputy. Gilmer pulled his weapon and shot out two tires in self-defense. The vehicle stopped, and numerous illegals, including the coyote smuggling the illegals into America, took off running. But one of Gilmer's bullets ricocheted in the SUV and hit a passenger as Gilmer fired at the fleeing vehicle. This was the first time Gilmer Hernandez had ever fired his pistol.

The sheriff and the Texas Rangers investigated the incident; and after investigating it thoroughly, they cleared Hernandez.

But upon the assistance of the arrogant Mexican Government one year after the incident, our almighty Federal Government prosecuted Gilmer for a civil rights violation, saying he should not have continued firing at the vehicle after it drove past him. So Gilmer Hernandez was sent off to prison at the behest of Mexico with the United States being the puppet. By the way, all of the illegals got to stay in the United States.

Many of the townspeople told me Saturday they thought Gilmer was right to defend himself. One old crusty Texas rancher called Gilmer a political prisoner.